## NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN RE:

THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF : NTSB Accident No. THE COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001

OCTOBER 1, 2015

Interview of: LTJG



Friday,

December 4, 2015

Residence Inn Jacksonville, Florida

**BEFORE:** 

CARRIE BELL, NTSB

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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## P-R-O-C-E-E-D-T-N-G-S

1	P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
2	12:20 p.m.
3	MS. BELL: Good morning. I guess it's
4	afternoon. I'm Carrie Bell. I am an investigator with
5	the NTSB and I am the Human Performance Group chairman
6	for this accident.
7	Today is the fourth of December. It is
8	12:20 p.m. and we are in a Residence Inn in
9	Jacksonville, Florida.
10	We are interviewing Lieutenant JG
11	Ms. can you spell your last name for
12	us for the record?
13	LTJG It's It's .
14	MS. BELL: Thank you. And also present in
15	the room today?
16	MR. RICHARDS: Mike Richards, NTSB,
17	Meteorology Group chair.
18	MR. PETERSON: Lee Peterson, TOTE party
19	coordinator.
20	MS. SERRIDGE: Melissa Serridge, HR manager
21	and member of the Human Performance Group.
22	LCDR with the Coast
23	Guard.
24	MR. FAWCETT: Keith Fawcett, Coast Guard. I
25	work with Carrie's Human Performance Group.

And Mark chief 1 LCDR 2 of the inspections division at Sector Jacksonville. MS. BELL: 3 Thank you. So, I just wanted to 4 give you just a quick background. I know you've heard 5 this before because this is your second interview, but 6 we are not part of the Department of Transportation or 7 the Coast Guard. We don't have any regulatory or enforcement 8 9 The purpose of the investigation is to powers. increase safety, not to assign fault, blame, or 10 11 liability. We cannot offer any quarantee of 12 confidentiality or immunity from legal or license 13 actions. 14 15 We would like to record the interview if 16 you're okay with that to ensure an accurate record. Do 17 you object to this? 18 No. LTJG 19 MS. BELL: And we will send you a transcript 2.0 once we're finished like we've done before so you can 21 review it. And if there's anything you think needs to 22 be -- if there is a mistake or something, that you can 23 correct that. And that will be done before it goes 24 into the public docket. 25 You're allowed to have one representative if

1 you choose to do so, and you have chosen to do so. You 2 can converse with him if there's anything that you have questions about off the record before you answer a 3 4 question if you need to do that. 5 We'd like to advise you to answer all the 6 questions to the best of your recollection. If you 7 don't understand a question feel free to ask us to 8 repeat it or clarify it in some way. 9 If there's anything that was misstated and you want to modify that you're welcome to do that as 10 11 well. So, if there aren't any questions we'll go 12 13 ahead and get started. Any questions? 14 LTJG No, ma'am. 15 Okay. So, I know this is your MS. BELL: 16 second interview so I don't want to belabor what you've 17 already told us about your background so I won't go 18 through all of that. 19 I'd like to just start with the specific voyage when you were aboard the El Faro. Could you 20 21 tell us why you were sent there and your duties onboard 22 the ship? 23 I was sent there for LTJG 24 basically a shipboard indoctrination program. As part 25 of my inspections apprentice duties we always go

1	onboard for a ship ride. So we had an agreement with
2	TOTE and that's why we've been going out on the El Faro
3	and the El Yunque in the past.
4	So, my duties onboard was basically to just
5	soak up as much information as I could about shipboard
6	life and what people onboard do on a daily basis so
7	that it could make me a better inspector in the long
8	run.
9	I had a like a workbook of questions that
LO	I had to get answered, or tasks that I needed to
11	complete which I sent into the Board.
L2	But also, so we did some engine room
13	observations and rounds in the engine room. And then
L4	we also did bridge work and then worked with the deck
15	department as well.
L6	MS. BELL: Okay. And when did you go
L7	onboard? Do you recall?
18	LTJG Oh, the first day was May 21,
L9	I believe. And it was for two weeks. The exact dates
20	were in my last interview.
21	MS. BELL: Yes, they are. Thank you.
22	LTJG I don't remember. But I
23	think it's May 21.
24	MS. BELL: Okay. So, one of the things
25	we're really trying to understand more about is the
l	

1	crew interactions, and interpersonal relationships, and
2	how everybody works together.
3	And we understand that you don't have, you
4	know, shipboard you're not an expert in shipboard
5	operations or anything like that.
6	But we just kind of want to understand your
7	appraisal of the crew members and how they worked
8	together and things of that nature. So that's kind of
9	where we're focusing our effort today.
10	LTJG Okay.
11	MS. BELL: So, if you could first do you
12	recall who the captain was?
13	LTJG Mike Davidson.
14	MS. BELL: And what about the chief mate?
15	LTJG Chief mate was Raymond
16	Thomas.
17	MS. BELL: Thompson?
18	LTJG Thompson.
19	MS. BELL: Okay. Second mate?
20	LTJG Danielle Randolph.
21	MS. BELL: And third mate?
22	LTJG Alex I'm forgetting his
23	last name.
24	MS. BELL: We can I don't think I need it
25	right now.

1	So, what about the chief engineer?
2	LTJG Richard
3	MS. BELL: Pusatere? Okay. And were any of
4	those people are you aware were on the El Faro?
5	LTJG They were all on. Except for
6	Alex. The chief mate and the third mate were not
7	onboard.
8	MS. BELL: Okay. Thank you. Can you
9	describe your first interaction with the captain when
10	you came aboard?
11	LTJG We had myself and one of
12	my petty officers checked in with him when we first got
13	onboard. He welcomed us onboard.
14	We filled out all the in-dock paperwork. He
15	told us that they were going to be at our disposal for
16	any questions and that he would help us do whatever we
17	needed.
18	And so he had the chief mate show us to our
19	rooms and we unpacked our stuff. The first day was
20	kind of hectic because it was cargo ops. So we kind of
21	stayed out of the way. But he was very welcoming.
22	MS. BELL: And when you said that they would
23	be at your disposal who was he referring to?
24	LTJG The crew.
25	MS. BELL: Okay. So, did he help you set up

any kind of a schedule for what you would do while you 1 2 were onboard? We initially asked that --3 LTJG the workbook lays out a quideline of different watches 4 5 you should stand. But since we were doing an 6 abbreviated schedule with it only being two weeks 7 instead of a month we asked him if there was anything 8 specific -- any schedule he wanted us to maintain, or 9 if we could just pick and choose what we wanted to do. 10 And we chose to basically work from the 11 moment we woke up to bedtime to kind of get a broad range of everything. But we didn't stand specific 12 We kind of just jumped around. 13 watches. That way we could follow all the different crew members. 14 15 And I didn't want to disturb them overnight 16 either so I just felt like it was better to kind of 17 train all day. 18 And he said whatever we wanted to do would 19 be fine. 2.0 Okay. So, like I said, I kind of MS. BELL: 21 want to just hear your own appraisal of the officers 22 aboard. 23 So, we'll start with the chief engineer. 24 We'll start from the engine room and move up to the 25 So, can you just give us your opinion, bridge.

1 appraisal of the chief engineer? 2 The chief engineer was LTJG He was probably besides Danielle because I 3 became friends with her, but the chief engineer was 4 5 probably the most excited to have us onboard. 6 He spent -- he really enjoyed teaching. 7 the engine room and particularly the steam ship was his 8 passion. 9 So, he would take us down in the engine It's really loud down there so it's hard to 10 11 hear, but he spent so much time trying to educate us on how the system worked, and every piece of machinery. 12 And he was always available for questions. 13 So, he -- I spent a lot of time with him. 14 15 And I thought he was fantastic, one of the best people 16 I've met. 17 MS. BELL: Okay. What about the other 18 people in the engine room? 19 They were all welcoming. 2.0 engine room was hard to learn because it was so loud 21 and so hot. But the second -- I worked a lot with the 22 second engineer Howie. 23 He was offgoing so we kind of gave him a 24 hard time because he was always like, oh, why are you 25 quys coming down now. Like I just want to stand my

1 last couple of watches. 2 But he was very happy. He had worked his way all the way up so he was a wealth of knowledge and 3 4 spent a lot of time talking to us about the different 5 pieces of the engine room and just his career in the 6 shipping industry. 7 Anyone else in the engine MS. BELL: Okay. 8 room? 9 We worked with -- the other LTJG one that took us around a lot was the third who is not 10 11 -- was not onboard at the time. But Mike Brennan. 12 And he showed us all -- particularly I asked 13 him to walk my other petty officer, the second -because the first week was very intensive of me and 14 15 Petty Officer going through everything. So, the second week we had kind of gotten 16 17 all the basics. I asked the third if he would walk my 18 second petty officer through, like, the barebones of an 19 engine room because he was new. 2.0 So, he took him through every, like, process 21 and was really knowledgeable and kind of broke it down 22 into layman's terms. 23 And we talked to the first engineer a lot, 24 but he was a day worker so we didn't spend as much time

with him.

1 MS. BELL: Okay. So in general would you 2 say that you felt welcome in the engine room while you were there? 3 4 LTJG The engine room was very 5 welcoming. 6 MS. BELL: Okay. Great. So, let's talk a 7 little bit about on the bridge. 8 So, how about the third mate. Can you 9 describe the third mate? 10 LTJG The third mate was also a 11 really wonderful teacher. He took a lot of pride in 12 his job. This was Alex. 13 Oh, okay. MS. BELL: 14 LTJG He was the one that gave us 15 the whole safety tour that lasted about -- the threehour safety tour of everything onboard the ship. 16 17 And he would just -- he was very by-the-18 book. I think he had recently graduated from school so 19 he was very knowledgeable about specific tasks and how 2.0 they were supposed to get done. 21 And he was teaching us how to plot. And 22 just every time we were on the bridge during his watch 23 he would just explain anything we needed, showed us all 24 the testing of the GMDSS and walked us through 25 steering.

1	He was just very approachable and willing to
2	train.
3	MS. BELL: Okay. And what about the second
4	mate?
5	LTJG She was
6	MS. BELL: This was Danielle Randolph.
7	LTJG Danielle. I well, I think
8	her and I became really close so I spent a lot of time
9	with her on watch.
10	But she would always be willing I mean,
11	her and I talked about a lot of other stuff besides
12	shipboard life, but just her experiences at sea on the
13	different ships, and her career.
14	And then she also trained us on everything
15	on the equipment side, and how to stand a good
16	navigational watch, and all the important stuff that we
17	were onboard to learn.
18	MS. BELL: Okay. And how about the chief
19	mate?
20	LTJG The chief mate took a little
21	bit to warm up to us. He was great once he started,
22	but he was definitely I think he was always busy
23	because he was in charge of cargo.
24	So, we had a portion of the cargo stuff that
25	we really needed to talk to him about, and he kept

saying like come back later, come back later. 1 2 But once he warmed up to us he was very approachable and helped us out with all of the cargo 3 portions. 4 5 And I think he was better my second week. Just, I did a mooring with him at the bow and he walked 6 7 me through everything, and all the steps. So he was 8 very welcoming. 9 Okay. And Captain Davidson? MS. BELL: Captain kind of -- he was 10 LTJG 11 very smart, and he taught us a lot, but there were 12 sometimes where I felt like he didn't necessarily want 13 us onboard. So he would definitely train us and kind of 14 15 teach us and share his stories. But then there was other times where he felt as though we were interfering 16 17 like the morale of the crew, and that we were more -not intimidating, but just because we were Coast Guard 18 19 that people weren't acting the same. 2.0 Did he -- I'm sorry. MS. BELL: 21 LTJG So I felt like there was a 22 little bit of tension with him. 23 MS. BELL: Was that the entire time you were there you had felt that? 24 25 LTJG Yes.

1 MS. BELL: And did he actually say that to 2 you, that he thought you were interfering? He did. And he also wrote it 3 LTJG 4 in the feedback forms that he provided. 5 MS. BELL: Was that -- I don't know if 6 you've spoken with anyone in -- your supervisor 7 regarding that, if that was unusual for a captain to 8 see you as an interference. Any conversation about 9 that? 10 We did mention it in our No. LTJG trip reports, or talk to our training officer upon 11 returning saying that we felt that if another group of 12 people were going to go out that it may be best not to 13 14 go with him as the captain. 15 But the rest of the crew, because they had heard him say stuff to us periodically, they were like 16 17 we just want you to know we have no problems with you 18 being onboard. 19 So, we got from deck hands all the way up 2.0 everyone was very reassuring and said that us being 21 onboard had no influence on them. So I felt like there 22 may have been some disconnect between the captain and 23 the rest of the crew. 24 Did he explain what he meant by MS. BELL: 25 being -- affecting the morale of the crew?

1 LTJG One of our questions on our 2 workbook was what does the crew do onboard for fun, or something along those lines. 3 And I said oh, well it seems like most of 4 crew is in their rooms after their watches. 5 the Do 6 you do anything onboard for morale? 7 And he's like usually we're all watching TV 8 and hanging out, but since you guys are onboard people 9 don't want to be as visible. 10 And I was later told that that was not 11 necessarily the case, that they, (a) they're tired and (b) they're just kind of lounging and doing their own 12 So it wasn't because of us, that that was how 13 14 the crew normally was. 15 MS. BELL: Yes. So, did the captain's 16 attitude make you feel a certain way? I mean, it 17 sounds like you got reassurance from the crew, but in 18 general how did that make you feel? 19 The first week it didn't LTJG really phase me because I think he was -- he would go 2.0 21 back and forth. 22 He would definitely take us into his office 23 and give us all his information about stuff, or he 24 would always be approachable for questions. 25 But then there was little jabs periodically

that you're like -- like he made us eat at a different 1 2 time because we were interfering with the crew's food 3 time. So, I just -- it got more and more apparent 4 as the two weeks were ending that it just felt less 5 comfortable to be near him because I could never 6 7 understand whether he wanted us there or didn't want us there. 8 9 MS. BELL: Okay. But then other times he would 10 LTJG 11 be really helpful. And when we were transiting he would pull us out on the bridge wing and tell us all 12 about the interaction with the pilots. So, he would 13 14 always train us, but you could feel that there was a 15 little source of not wanting us there. 16 MS. BELL: Yes. So, let's talk a little bit 17 about -- I just want you to kind of characterize for me the working relationship between the captain and we'll 18 19 start with the third mate. 2.0 I didn't see them that LTJG 21 interact that often, the third mate and him. 22 He -- the captain was very cordial with 23 everybody that was on the bridge at the time. So, if 24 the captain was on the bridge and the third mate was there they would talk and socialize. But there wasn't

1	1 didn't see a lot of camaraderie between the crew
2	and the captain.
3	MS. BELL: Okay. With any of the crew?
4	LTJG He seemed obviously,
5	especially in the galley. Like he would sit with the
6	chief engineer first engineer. So, I felt as though
7	they all got along a lot. But I'm not sure.
8	I mean, he was cordial with them all. I
9	just didn't see them socializing a whole bunch.
LO	MS. BELL: Okay. So what about with the
11	second mate, with Danielle?
L2	LTJG He was great with her. I
L3	think that she expressed to me sometimes that he would
L4	say stuff that she didn't necessarily not like in a
L5	bad way, but I mean, just his views on shipboard life,
L6	and I don't know.
L7	There seemed to be a little bit of
18	contention between the captain and the crew in general.
L9	MS. BELL: Okay. So, can you give me an
20	example of something that she might have mentioned?
21	LTJG I think I mentioned in my
22	last interview about the work hours. One of my petty
23	officers asked about the different types of work hours
24	that you could have onboard a ship.
25	And he had said that the crew doesn't need

any more -- they get plenty of rest. And Danielle said 1 2 that he was very strict of having to work no matter -even if there was nothing to do, that they had to be up 3 4 during their work hours. 5 And that there was no flexibility in that And he didn't really -- take into account that regard. 6 7 it wasn't -- I don't know what I'm trying to -- I think 8 that he was very by the books and believed a certain 9 And there was not much flexibility, or he mentality. 10 didn't really sympathize with the people underneath 11 him. Can you think of any other 12 MS. BELL: examples that she might have provided aside from that 13 14 one about just in general. You mentioned like a 15 contentious environment. Anything else in particular 16 that comes to mind? 17 I think that during our two LTJG 18 weeks there was the transition between TOTE's new ship 19 and the transition of the El Faro going to Alaska. 2.0 So, there was a lot of contention amongst --21 I think contention and then also just the unknown 22 between who was going to what ship, who wasn't going to 23 any ship. And there was a lot of heated discussions. 24

Or some people knew they were going to the new ship but

wouldn't tell other people they were going to the new 1 2 ship. And I think that Captain Davidson knew he 3 wasn't going to the new ship and it made for a little 4 5 bit of tension amongst everybody. And Danielle knew she wasn't going to the 6 7 new ship, but she was okay with it. Like, she was 8 excited about going to Alaska. 9 But I don't think that everyone was 10 comfortable with the news that they had heard, or not 11 knowing yet. And that caused a lot of disgruntlement throughout our two weeks. Like, we heard about it. 12 was very noticeable and they talked to us about it all 13 the time. 14 15 MS. BELL: Do you know if it was something that had just occurred, if he had found out recently 16 17 that he was not getting that position? 18 LTJG I believe he did. It seemed 19 I mean, people were still finding out. very new to us. 2.0 I know a lot of the crew was still concerned 21 because they hadn't heard anything. So, I think that 22 all that was happening and I don't know for sure, but I 23 know it seemed very recent because it was such a big 24 topic of conversation. 25 MS. BELL: I want to jump back to you were

talking about Danielle and some of the things about him 1 2 not having empathy for the sleep schedule and things of that nature. Or just getting any extra sleep or extra 3 4 rest. 5 LTJG Right. 6 MS. BELL: Sometimes there's just that, you 7 know, the working relationship and the personal kind of 8 intermingle and cause some conflict. 9 And I'm just wondering about -- did she ever mention anything about if she had an issue with 10 11 navigation, or anything like that that she might or 12 might not raise that with him because of this tension? 13 No, there was never anything LTJG said to me about not going to him because of something. 14 15 I think that their internal disputes were 16 more on a personal basis and not on a working 17 relationship basis. So, I felt very comfortable with 18 the fact that they would talk to him if they needed to, 19 or go to him if there was a problem in regards to 2.0 shipboard like operations-wise. 21 MS. BELL: Okay. So to clarify, you're 22 saying that, if I understand correctly, that the 23 personal issues wouldn't have likely -- or may not have affected any decisions made regarding vessel safety or 24

navigation?

1 LTJG Correct. And I wasn't 2 onboard during any major situations that came up that needed to be addressed so I don't know -- I never 3 witnessed them having to go to him for something 4 5 specific. 6 But they seemed to talk to him just like 7 anybody would for a normal supervisor-subordinate role. 8 Okay. Speaking of supervisors, MS. BELL: 9 do you know or did you guys ever have any conversations about -- with Danielle or any of the other crew members 10 11 about performance evaluations? 12 I don't remember. LTJG 13 Okay. And you mentioned that you MS. BELL: 14 spent a good bit of time with the second mate Danielle 15 And I don't know if on a personal level if on watch. 16 you guys spent much time together outside of that, you 17 know, during your recreational time. But did she ever talk to you about Captain 18 Davidson? 19 2.0 She mentioned -- she's made LTJG 21 comments to me about him, but I don't remember enough 22 to feel comfortable putting it on record that she said 23 something that I don't know if I could quote. 24 makes sense. 25 I know that she's expressed some stuff about

1	him not being as respectful, or just not being, like,
2	nice. But I don't know if I could quote enough to be -
3	-
4	MS. BELL: You don't have to quote anything.
5	I'm just asking just in general if she ever if there
6	were certain things that might have bothered her about
7	him.
8	Or any of the I'm not specifically
9	pinpointing her, but just in general if anyone was
10	saying anything about him.
11	LTJG I think one of the things
12	that I remember is that she did say he had kind of a
13	temper and would go off occasionally if he was upset.
14	MS. BELL: Okay. Did you ever see that?
15	LTJG I did not.
16	MS. BELL: Did you hear about any specific
17	issues regarding that?
18	LTJG No.
19	MS. BELL: Okay. And in general, not
20	specific to anyone, or just about safety or anything.
21	Were there any complaints, a general something that was
22	aside from the conflict about the LNG ships, was
23	there anything that stands out to you?
24	LTJG The crew never mentioned
25	anything that I remember in regards to safety.
	I

1 I know Alex was very safety-conscious so 2 when we did the inventory of the lifeboat we were all harnessed up, and life jackets. 3 4 They never had any -- or they never expressed any concerns that I remember in regards to a 5 6 safety issue. 7 Okay. And for you, did you feel MS. BELL: 8 safe? 9 I felt completely safe. LTJG 10 MS. BELL: Okay. Thank you. I'm going to 11 pass it around the room. 12 (inaudible) \*7:18:51 MS. BELL: Maybe. Yes, maybe we'll go 13 around and then come back to that. 14 15 MR. FAWCETT: Keith Fawcett with the Coast 16 Guard. Ms. Bell asked you about the third mate 17 and the second mate. Can you talk to me about the 18 working relationship between the captain and the chief 19 mate? 2.0 They seemed to have a good LTJG 21 relationship I think. They were the ones that I saw 22 spending the most time together onboard. They would 23 watch TV at night, and they would make jokes in the 24 galley together. So they seemed really close. 25 But I also think that there was a little bit

1 of contention personally because of the different 2 positions they were being given with the company. But overall on a personal level it looked as 3 though they were the ones that got along the most and 4 5 spent a lot of time together. And just to talk about the MR. FAWCETT: 6 7 contention again. At that time did you know that 8 Thompson was getting a position on the LNG ship? I don't remember. 9 LTJG 10 like some people wouldn't tell us because they didn't 11 want anybody to know so they kind of kept it private. I don't remember if I knew for sure he was 12 going to be on the new ship. I knew Danielle wasn't 13 going to be on the new ship, and I knew that the chief 14 15 engineer was going to the new ship. But I don't remember the details about the 16 17 other people. I think I -- I think I had an idea that the chief mate was going, but I don't remember for sure 18 19 if I knew at that moment. 2.0 MR. FAWCETT: So, the contention was general 21 in nature. 22 Looking at your training that you -- and 23 checklist, PQS qualification that you were doing, did 24 it include -- and we might have asked you this before, 25 but I just want to touch base.

1	When the ship was getting ready to leave
2	Jacksonville, or getting ready to leave San Juan, did
3	you witness like the pre-departure operations related
4	to finishing up cargo loading?
5	LTJG I don't think we did. When
6	we were getting ready to leave we were mostly stationed
7	on the bridge. So, I don't remember the details of
8	like the last cargo cargo being finished.
9	I knew that the chief mate would get a list
10	of all the cargo that made it onboard, but I don't
11	think that we had much involvement in that portion.
12	MR. FAWCETT: Do you recall the chief mate
13	or communicating with the bridge any information that
14	you observed related to draft marks, taking of draft
15	readings?
16	LTJG Yes.
17	MR. FAWCETT: And what do you recall?
18	LTJG I vaguely remember the chief
19	mate talking about the different draft marks, and then
20	also Danielle would go around, or the cadet would go
21	around and take soundings prior to us leaving. But I
22	don't remember the specifics.
23	But I remember that being a topic that they
24	discussed prior to leaving.
25	MR. FAWCETT: Do you ever recall them

talking about where -- and I know you just mentioned that, but did they ever talk about taking draft readings on the port side of the ship? Which would be the opposite side where the ship was docked or berthed. I don't remember. LTJG MR. FAWCETT: Thank you. Just following up on the PQS. MS. BELL: Ι was just reading through it and I noticed that the vessel's security plan was something you hadn't checked off. And you noted that you were not allowed to view that. Can you explain why? The captain refused to let us LTJG look at the security plan which I thought was abnormal because for foreign ships we're not allowed to view security plans. So I'm used to that because that's what I usually do. But for the U.S. ships we approve them. in one of the sign-offs it says review security plan and look through it and look what's in it. And he basically explained to us what a security plan was, but then refused to let us see it. He's like it's locked up and you don't need to see it. And so that's why I just took a note because I thought

it was strange that he wouldn't let us look at it.

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1 he was very adamant about it. 2 Danielle was in charge of security so she showed me some of their security exercises. She's like 3 I know the captain said you can't see this stuff, but 4 5 she's like I don't see any reason. So she showed me like her security rounds, 6 7 logbooks and things like that. But he still never 8 allowed us to look at the security plan. 9 Did he give an explanation as to MS. BELL: why? 10 11 LTJG He just said that it was 12 secret, or not -- I didn't need to see it. 13 MS. BELL: Okay. 14 LTJG He didn't really give me a 15 good explanation. Okay. I know we're going to talk 16 MS. BELL: 17 a little bit about weather. If I recall there was not 18 much weather when you were on the ship? 19 No, I had pretty much perfect 2.0 weather for the two weeks. So, seas were calm. There 21 was light wind. I think it rained maybe once. 22 rained while we were in port in Puerto Rico, like 23 torrential downpour, but for the transit it was just almost -- it was like super flat. 24 25 MS. BELL: But were you able to learn about

1	how to use the systems on the bridge? Is that
2	something you did?
3	LTJG We did briefly look at how
4	they pulled up weather and showed tides and currents.
5	But we didn't pay too much attention to it because
6	there wasn't much to see.
7	And then we also read through the NavTex.
8	We kept getting a hurricane warning in the Pacific.
9	They kept popping up like hourly. So, I saw all their
10	weather documentation from GMDSS.
11	And then I saw their computer program. But
12	other than that I didn't really get too involved in it.
13	MS. BELL: Okay. I'm going to defer to Mike
14	about the weather.
15	MR. RICHARDS: Yes, no, thanks. Mike
16	Richards, NTSB.
17	I wasn't present at your first interview.
18	I'm sorry if some of this may be redundant.
19	LTJG Okay.
20	MR. RICHARDS: But you were asked if you had
21	sailed under heavy weather. The answer was no.
22	I don't recall what was going on in the
23	tropics, but while were you sailing those two weeks
24	were there any tropical systems, tropical storms,
25	hurricanes in the let's say the eastern part of the

1	Atlantic or in the Gulf during that time?
2	LTJG I don't believe there were.
3	MR. RICHARDS: Okay. I don't recall. So,
4	just to clarify, what services were onboard the El Faro
5	to receive weather on the bridge?
6	LTJG There was NavTex and then
7	their computer software program, but I don't know the
8	name of it.
9	MR. RICHARDS: Does BonVoyage or BVS, does
10	that name ring a bell?
11	LTJG BVS sounds familiar, but.
12	MR. RICHARDS: Okay. You had mentioned an
13	acronym G
14	LTJG GMDSS.
15	MR. RICHARDS: GMDSS. I'm sorry. What is
16	that?
17	LTJG I
18	MR. RICHARDS: Is there a relation to
19	weather information?
20	LTJG Well, NavTex is part of
21	GMDSS. So it's a system of safety information. It
22	includes as my boss is sitting right next to me.
23	MR. RICHARDS: Oh, I'm sorry. Do you want
24	me to withdraw that question?
25	(Laughter)

1	LTJG No, that's fine. But it
2	includes like Inmarsat-C, NavTex.
3	MR. RICHARDS: Okay.
4	LTJG So, it's a compilation of
5	satellite systems onboard the ships. Sorry.
6	MR. RICHARDS: No, I'm not an expert so, you
7	know, my questions may not make the most sense.
8	But just so I get an understanding.
9	Inmarsat-C as best as you understand, Inmarsat-C and
10	NavTex are two different systems.
11	LTJG Yes.
12	MR. RICHARDS: Can you receive weather
13	information via both of those systems?
14	LTJG I believe so.
15	MR. RICHARDS: Okay. While you were onboard
16	did you witness any of the officers receiving or
17	reading and/or requesting weather information?
18	LTJG We were getting the NavTex
19	pretty heavily with the and I believe it was a storm
20	out in the Pacific. But it had come in so frequently
21	that they just I mean, they had a binder that they
22	put it in. But every time it came up they'd scan it to
23	make sure it was the same system and not anywhere near
24	where we were, and then they'd file it away or clear it
25	on their computer system.

1	But I don't remember them calling to get
2	weather from anywhere besides what was on the computer
3	system.
4	MR. RICHARDS: When you say "they" were
5	there particular officers that were more focused on the
6	weather component of the operations than other
7	officers?
8	LTJG The only ones that I remember
9	doing weather were the third and the second. But I
10	didn't stand much of a watch with the chief mate who
11	had the I stood most of my watches with the third
12	and the second.
13	MR. RICHARDS: Did you witness the captain
14	reviewing weather information onboard?
15	LTJG I he would get like a noon
16	report that had weather on it and he would look at
17	that. But I don't recall him ever going up to the
18	computer and looking at weather.
19	MR. RICHARDS: And who gave the noon report?
20	LTJG I believe it was Danielle
21	because she would have been coming onto watch. Or I
22	don't know, one of them because the watch would finish
23	right about that time.
24	MR. RICHARDS: And this was a verbal report
25	to the captain?
I	I and the second

1	LTJG It was a written report.
2	MR. RICHARDS: And a written report. Okay.
3	I think I just have one more question. Do you recall
4	any conversation amongst the officers about the weather
5	information that they received, positive, negative,
6	indifferent?
7	LTJG I think it was indifferent.
8	I mean, they knew they had weather. I don't remember
9	them saying that it was good or bad. So, indifferent.
10	MR. RICHARDS: Thank you very much.
11	LTJG You're welcome.
12	MR. FAWCETT: Keith Fawcett, Coast Guard.
13	Captain Davidson, were there any comments made by any
14	shipboard personnel about the amount of time he spent
15	on the bridge in relation to other masters?
16	LTJG I don't recall. I know he
17	usually came up periodically on every watch and sat in
18	his chair, and had a snack, and talked to the crew for
19	a few minutes and then would go back to his room.
20	There were comments that he spent a lot of
21	time in his stateroom, or watching TV.
22	MR. FAWCETT: Did he who ran the safety
23	meetings when you were aboard?
24	LTJG Oh, that we had one safety
25	meeting when I was onboard and it was run by the chief

1 mate. And then we had the safety in-dock that was done 2 by the third. And did you -- other than 3 MR. FAWCETT: 4 yourselves as the Coast Guard people, and the cadets, were there any other ship riders aboard during the time 5 6 you were aboard? 7 LTJG No. Did you, during your time 8 MR. FAWCETT: 9 onboard did you witness any what I would call voyage 10 planning prior to departure where the captain either 11 met with all of the bridge officers, or single bridge 12 officers to discuss the upcoming voyage? 13 I don't recall witnessing it. LTJG 14 I do -- I asked about voyage planning and they showed 15 me the documents that go into it. And I think I may 16 have written it down in my PQS. 17 They would have an all-hands prior to 18 departing where they discussed the voyage, but I don't 19 remember the specifics of that. 2.0 MR. FAWCETT: I know you don't remember the 21 specifics, but could you talk a little bit about what 22 the all-hands was? What you remember. 23 I honestly don't remember. LTJG 24 just remember that they had on the board that they had 25 an all-hands and then certain people would get woken up

1	for that if it was at a certain time. I don't remember
2	the details.
3	MR. FAWCETT: Okay. What I mean is where
4	was it? Like where on the ship did it occur?
5	LTJG I believe it occurred on the
6	bridge.
7	MR. FAWCETT: And did you attend any of
8	those?
9	LTJG I think I did, but I don't
10	remember. I don't think I attended all of them. There
11	were a couple of where we we weren't always
12	notified. We were in different rooms so we weren't
13	woken up. So if we left at a certain time I wouldn't
14	always know what time they were meeting.
15	I think I attended the first one. We got up
16	to the bridge prior, like, an hour or two prior to us
17	leaving. But I don't remember too much about it.
18	MR. FAWCETT: Okay. Other than the captain,
19	when you were on the bridge of the El Faro when she was
20	underway did you observe anyone sitting down?
21	LTJG No.
22	MR. FAWCETT: Did you understand why the
23	captain sat down and other people didn't sit down?
24	LTJG I just felt like he could sit
25	down because he was the captain. I know that they

1	because even one of my guys sat down for a second and I
2	told him to get not in his chair, but like I told
3	him to get up because if you're on watch you should be
4	standing a diligent watch.
5	So, I just assumed that if you were on watch
6	you don't sit down. But the captain was just kind of
7	visiting.
8	MR. FAWCETT: Nobody told you that.
9	LTJG No.
10	MR. FAWCETT: And just to clarify, I think
11	when we asked you before you said you were assigned to
12	the motor lifeboat. Or were you assigned to the
13	Fleming gear lifeboat? Starboard or port?
14	LTJG I don't remember.
15	MR. FAWCETT: Okay. How would you have
16	known which boat?
17	LTJG It was in my room. It said
18	on the back of the door which one I was assigned to.
19	MR. FAWCETT: And what did it say?
20	LTJG I think it said number 1, but
21	I don't remember.
22	MR. FAWCETT: And when you were aboard at
23	the time it was clear to you, completely unambiguous
24	which boat you went to in an emergency?
25	LTJG Yes. Except my second so,

1	my room was very clear on the muster list and in my		
2	room it said one specific lifeboat.		
3	My petty officer in the other room, his room		
4	said one thing and the muster list said a different		
5	thing. But we talked to Alex about it and he fixed it		
6	to make sure that the room said the correct one.		
7	MR. FAWCETT: And how long did it take to		
8	get fixed?		
9	LTJG I think we asked that day		
10	because we were confused. Either that or it was during		
11	the safety meeting or safety in-dock.		
12	MR. FAWCETT: So it would have been		
13	LTJG It would have been		
14	MR. FAWCETT: when you came aboard.		
15	LTJG Yes, or the very next day as		
16	soon as we got underway.		
17	MR. FAWCETT: That was very helpful. Thank		
18	you.		
19	LTJG You're welcome.		
20	MS. BELL: I have a question, a follow-up		
21	question to Keith's question about the muster stations		
22	and lifeboats.		
23	If I recall correctly in our previous		
24	interview you did say that you participated in a safety		
25	drill where you actually went to the station.		
	1		

1 How many times did you do that while you 2 were aboard? 3 LTJG Just once. 4 MS. BELL: And was that -- when was that 5 when you were onboard? So, how long had you been on? 6 LTJG I think it was the second 7 week I was onboard. I have the date listed 8 specifically on one of the pages in my -- I have in the 9 PQS, it's not like a full log, but on top I think it 10 says diary log and I made little notes of when we did things. 11 I believe it was the second week I was 12 13 The first week we just had a safety meeting. onboard. MS. BELL: So, if you weren't in your room 14 15 to see what it said on the back of the door, or 16 wherever it was posted in your room, would you have 17 remembered anyway because -- was that something that 18 was discussed? What if you weren't in your room when the drill happened? How would you know where to go? 19 2.0 Prior to me looking at my LTJG Like if I had just gotten onboard and didn't go 21 door? 22 to my room? 23 Or if you had forgotten. MS. BELL: 24 know, it was in your room but you were out and about 25 and it was your first and second day. Would you have

1 remembered that? 2 I don't know if I would have LTJG I believe there was something on the remembered it. 3 bridge that documented which position went to which 4 5 lifeboat. So, and I was -- I forget what it was 6 7 called, but I think it was just a ship rider because we 8 were staying in quest rooms. 9 And so if I recall that document up on the bridge listed where we would go based on our position. 10 11 MS. BELL: Okay. So there were other places 12 that it was listed. 13 LTJG Yes, ma'am. 14 MS. BELL: Okay. Thank you. I'm going to 15 go back to -- we talked briefly about the sleep 16 opportunity. 17 And you briefly described before in our 18 previous interview the hours that you worked and that Danielle worked. 19 2.0 I'm specifically talking about her because 21 that's what I remember about that conversation, that 22 she shared with you a concern about not getting enough 23 sleep. 24 Can you describe the hours that she was 25 working, if you remember?

1	LTJG She did the the 12 to 4's.			
2	So she would be on bridge watch at 12, get off at 4.			
3	Then she would be back on watch at midnight to 4.			
4	MS. BELL: Okay.			
5	LTJG So, she would usually get off			
6	a watch. Then she would have to get I'm trying to			
7	think of the dinner schedule. But she would grab her			
8	dinner to go, quickly go to bed or try to go to bed			
9	until midnight, then eat her dinner before watch. Then			
10	go on watch from 12 to 4. And then she would be up at			
11	like 8 to do her day working section.			
12	MS. BELL: Okay. So 12 a.m. to 4 a.m. And			
13	then she was off for four hours?			
14	LTJG Yes. She would sleep from			
15	like 4 to 8 and then have to be up from 8 to do her not			
16	watch hours, but day working hours.			
17	MS. BELL: Until what time?			
18	LTJG Until her watch started again			
19	at noon.			
20	MS. BELL: Okay. So, she had four hours			
21	there to sleep. And then noon to 4. And then she had			
22	4 to midnight. Is that correct?			
23	LTJG Correct. So, she would be on			
24	yes, she would get on watch at 12 in the afternoon,			
25	stand watch until 4. Then she'd usually like work out,			

1	and then get dinner to go, and sleep from like 5 to			
2	midnight.			
3	And then at midnight stand watch, get off			
4	the watch at 4, go to bed until 8.			
5	MS. BELL: Thank you for describing that.			
6	LTJG Because I even asked, like,			
7	we were talking about hanging out once I got off the			
8	ship. And I was like can't we meet for dinner? And			
9	she's like if I met for dinner then I can't sleep. So,			
10	like she only had that dinnertime window to get enough			
11	sleep.			
12	MS. BELL: Okay. And did you ever hear			
13	anyone else have any concerns about getting enough			
14	sleep?			
15	LTJG No. I think she's the only			
16	one that expressed those concerns.			
17	And I didn't talk I spent a lot of time			
18	with the engine room people, but it was more engine			
19	room-specific, or ship-specific. Less personal stuff.			
20	So, I think because her and I were the only			
21	ones that really discussed that.			
22	MS. BELL: Okay. Thank you.			
23	LTJG You're welcome.			
24	MS. BELL: I'm going to go back around.			
25	MR. RICHARDS: I do have one follow-up			
ı				

1 question. Back to the weather. 2 So, you identified Inmarsat-C, NavTex, and another program which -- maybe "program" wasn't your 3 word, but what was the additional way that the officers 4 5 could receive weather information? 6 It was from the computer LTJG 7 So, they would pull up tides and currents and 8 then -- it was -- I remember it being a map that they 9 pulled up, a computer software program on the computer that would pull up a map. And it would input different 10 11 weather. You could check different boxes and it would 12 show a different weather on that computer screen. 13 Was this a laptop computer? MR. RICHARDS: 14 LTJG No, it was a -- oh, was it? 15 Yes, I quess it was. There was one computer on the 16 bridge that was -- here's the chart table and it was in 17 the corner. So, there's one means of -- and it had 18 email. People would do their payroll on it. And then 19 they had weather. But it was like the one computer 2.0 accessible at the bridge. 21 MR. RICHARDS: Okay. So, this program was 22 on this laptop computer on the bridge. 23 LTJG Yes. 24 Did you see any other MR. RICHARDS: 25 instances of this weather program on any other

1 computers on the ship? 2 LTJG No, that was the only computer that I -- that I got on. I know the captain 3 had a computer and he showed us different spreadsheets 4 5 on it, but that was in regards to cargo and other 6 things. 7 But I never looked at anyone else's 8 computer. 9 MR. RICHARDS: While at sea did you have 10 internet access? 11 LTJG Only on the bridge computer. 12 I think the bridge and the captain. And maybe the officers had internet, but there wasn't internet 13 available like to the general population. I think the 14 15 bridge computer may have been, the bridge and the captain's were the only ones from my understanding. 16 17 MR. RICHARDS: Okay. But you're not -- I'm 18 looking at your face. You're not -- are you sure? 19 Well, I mean, I didn't have 2.0 access to any Wi-Fi or internet while we were underway. 21 I know that the bridge did because they would -- yes, I 22 know the bridge did and I know the captain did, but I 23 don't know if anybody else had computer, like, public. 24 Okay. I understand what MR. RICHARDS: 25 you're saying. Last question.

The bridge computer that you're referencing 1 2 with regards to internet availability. Was this the same laptop computer that had the weather program 3 installed on it? 4 5 LTJG Yes. 6 MR. RICHARDS: Okay. Thank you. 7 with the Coast LCDR 8 Guard. Just to clarify the internet. 9 What did you actually observe? I mean, 10 obviously they get the weather information, the email. 11 Did you observe any capability to surf the web or anything like that? Or was it some limited types of 12 13 information that you actually observed? I don't recall. 14 LTJG I know we 15 weren't searching the internet for anything. There was 16 even times we were joking because we would ask 17 questions and be like oh, too bad we can't Google it. 18 So, I think that it was very limited to what 19 it was authorized. Like, I remember there was 2.0 definitely email and then the weather program. I think they also got chart corrections and 21 22 stuff via another computer program on that computer. 23 But I don't think it was just a standard 24 computer access. I believe it was just work 25 designated.

1	LCDR So, did you ever see any			
2	capability to go to NOAA's National Weather Service, or			
3	any other weather information, internet-based, outside			
4	of those programs or email?			
5	LTJG I don't recall.			
6	LCDR Okay, thanks.			
7	MR. FAWCETT: Keith Fawcett with the Coast			
8	Guard. Since the El Faro accident have you been			
9	received any or been in any communications with the			
10	families of the El Faro?			
11	LTJG I met Danielle's mom at the			
12	family meeting that was held right after the situation			
13	happened. I just introduced myself and I haven't			
14	talked to her since.			
15	MR. FAWCETT: Anyone else?			
16	LTJG No. I saw the third mate the			
17	other day on the new ship and just said hi and checked			
	other day on the new ship and just said in and theteked			
18	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to			
18 19				
	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to			
19	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to anybody else.			
19 20	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to anybody else.  MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.			
19 20 21	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to anybody else.  MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.  MS. BELL: One more question to follow up			
19 20 21 22	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to anybody else.  MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.  MS. BELL: One more question to follow up what you just said. You were on the new ship?			
19 20 21 22 23	in to see how he was doing. But I haven't spoken to anybody else.  MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.  MS. BELL: One more question to follow up what you just said. You were on the new ship?  LTJG I went to the new ship for			

1 we went onboard and our training officer just gave us a 2 rundown of the LNG, and how it all worked, and just showed us. It was kind of like a little field trip. 3 MS. BELL: 4 Okay. Just curious. I didn't get underway with 5 LTJG 6 them. 7 Any other questions? MS. BELL: 8 MR. RICHARDS: Just, I'm still thinking 9 Let me ask one more question just about that topic. for clarification on the question of internet. 10 11 LTJG Okay. 12 MR. RICHARDS: Okay? Except for your 13 understanding that they had access to email, and that 14 there was a computer weather program that was installed 15 on the laptop, was there anything else that you saw or 16 did that made you think that there was, for lack of a 17 better term, live internet available on that computer 18 or on that bridge while at sea? 19 Anything specific on the 2.0 computer that they did that would be internet-capable. 21 Is that what you're saying? 22 MR. RICHARDS: Anything that you witnessed 23 or experienced that would lead you to believe that 24 there was live internet access available via that 25 laptop on the bridge.

LTJG No. MR. RICHARDS: Okay. Thank you. MS. BELL: Okay, I don't think we have anymore questions. LTJG Okay. Thank you very much for your time MS. BELL: and that concludes the interview. It's 1:18. (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 1:18 p.m.) 

## CERTIFICATE

MATTER: El Faro Incident October 1, 2015

NTSB Accident No. DCA16MM001

Interview of

DATE: 12-04-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 49 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



## **NEAL R. GROSS**



## Office of Marine Safety Transcript Errata

Matter: EL FARO Investigation/Interview

Ref Nbr: DCA16MM001	
Dear :	
Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the two to copy of the two cop	
Thank you in advance for your attention to thi	is matter.
12/21/15	Carrie Bell
Date	Major Marine Accident Investigator

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1	OCT 15, 2015	

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING	
5	18	Coast Guard Sector New	lork Coast Guard Sector Jack	somille
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TABLE OF CORRECTI	ONS TO TRANSCR	IPT OF INTERVIEW
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